

NO. 0321
(Sense-of-the-Assembly)
ON U.S. POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit."
Galatians 5: 22-25

Theological Rationale

In these times of war and rumors of war, we are surrounded by voices that cry for revenge, voices that inspire hatred, and voices that demand control. Such voices are not unique to our times. They are present across the ages, just as war is recorded in the annals of history in all times and places. They are not the only voices that cry out, though! Paul's letter to the Galatians shows us a clear alternative, an attitude not determined by our basest instincts but rather guided by a faithful discernment of the Spirit's guidance in our own lives, and the life of our nations. We are thus called to be instruments of the Spirit's reconciling fruits, especially of peace, patience, and self-control; and to make our voices heard among the clamor for war.

The Middle East has been a constant focus of our nation's attention in recent months and years. Serious efforts to attain comprehensive peace in the region go back decades. United States foreign policymakers and Congress have wrestled extensively with the unignorable tension in the region. At the core of this tension is the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which manifests itself politically, socially, and economically, and has contributed to events and phenomena that have had significant implications worldwide, including the events of September 11, 2001. A just resolution of the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict, one that recognizes the pain and suffering of all sides, would be a primary factor in making progress toward a lasting peace in the region. The US has a central role in resolving the conflict, for it is the only country that can exert sufficient positive influence over all the actors.

As Christians, our voice must be one of peace, patience, and self-control. It must also be one of justice and fairness. As a nation, the United States is not the sole agent in determining international relations. We must be open to efforts that attempt to bridge gaps, to resolve differences, and to make peace. In taking seriously our sacred vocation, we bring this resolution

WHEREAS, the United States has executed foreign policy in the Middle East inconsistently—especially through selective reference to United Nations resolutions— which has grave implications for the nations and peoples of the Middle East, and thus threatens to compromise responsible US leadership;

WHEREAS, the United States is the only global power in a position to be a primary and effective broker of peace and justice in the Middle East; and

WHEREAS, the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the leading cause of hostility in the Middle East and has had devastating effects on the people of the entire region;

WHEREAS, Israelis and Palestinians have suffered injury and death as a result of acts of violence perpetrated by both parties to the conflict, and that the occupation of Palestinian lands is violent and begets violence; and

WHEREAS, in March 2003, against the expressed opposition of many people and nations of the world, including our Global Ministries partners, the United States waged a war against Iraq with the stated aim of disarming Iraq and effecting regime change;

WHEREAS, the Church, and particularly the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), is called by its head, Jesus Christ, to be reconcilers, peacemakers, and advocates for justice;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

1. Calls upon the US government to uphold Middle East policy based upon principles of human rights and human justice;
2. Calls for a consistent and coherent approach to US policy in the Middle East, including, but not limited to, the issues of weapons proliferation and enforcement of United Nations resolutions in a principled way;
3. Expresses opposition to unprovoked US military action, preferring the pursuit of diplomatic means to resolve differences between governments;

4. Calls upon the U.S. government to support relief and reconstruction efforts generously working through the United Nations, allowing non-governmental organizations full and unconditional access to provide relief in Iraq, and to work diligently to mend broken fences with countries of the region and the world in order to reduce feelings of animosity and distrust;
5. Calls upon the US government to actively commit to work fairly and creatively for peace and justice for Palestinians and Israelis, and most urgently to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, in keeping with international law;
6. Calls upon the congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to appreciate the connections we have with Christians in the Middle East through partnerships and mission relationships, by strengthening those connections through engagement in healing the brokenness and distrust created by war and national isolationism; by contributing to relief and reconstruction appeals through the Week of Compassion; and by engaging in activities that promote bridge-building between churches in the US and churches in the Middle East and people of Middle Eastern heritage here in this country;
7. Communicates these concerns and positions to the leaders of the United States government and to the other members of the United Nations Security Council.

Common Global Ministries Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
and the United Church of Christ

The General Board recommends that the General Assembly
ADOPT Business Item No. 0321. (Debate time 24 minutes)
